

October 26, 2010

**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
BUREAU OF RAIL AND TRANSIT**

**CONFERENCE REPORT**

**DATE OF MEETING:** October 5, 2010

**LOCATION OF MEETING:** Greater Dover and Portsmouth

(Link to: [Dover to Portsmouth Route Map](#) ..... [Dover Route Map Inset](#) ..... [Portsmouth Route Map Inset](#))

**PARTICIPANTS:**

Bill Kennedy, Greater Dover and Portsmouth Areas Review Leader

Marc Ambrosi, Strafford Regional Planning Commission

Scott Bogle, Rockingham Planning Commission

Steve Pesci, University of New Hampshire Campus Planning Special Projects Director

Dirk Timmons, Wildcat Transit Director

Beverly Cray Wildcat Transit Manager

Tom Morgan, Town Planner, Town of Newington

Peter Britz, Portsmouth Environmental Planner and Sustainability Coordinator

Bruce Woodruff, Dover City Planner

Rick Taintor, Portsmouth Planning Director

Josh Pierce, SABR (Seacoast Area Bicycle Routes)

Roland Provost, Dover

Buster Miller, Dover

William Fisk, Granite State Wheelman Safety and Education Committee

Charley LaFlamme, Bicycle Coalition of Maine

Jerry Moore, NHDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Technician

Larry Keniston, NHDOT Bureau of Rail and Transit Intermodal Facilities Engineer

**SUBJECT:** Greater Dover and Portsmouth Intermodal Transportation Review

**NOTES ON MEETING:**

On Thursday, October 5, 2010, the New Hampshire Department of Transportation conducted a bicycle facilities review on a 40-mile bicycle ride through the Greater Dover and Portsmouth areas.

Dover

Beginning at the McConnell Center in Dover City Hall. Bruce Woodruff led a discussion sharing the City's vision for the Dover Community Trail. Mr. Woodruff announced that paving would begin on portions of the Trail next spring.

Participants began pedaling north to Washington Street, following through the Dover Central City Loop, then turning west into the Amtrak station, where an impressive array of intermodal transportation options exist in the city. At the back of the Amtrak station parking lot, participants proceeded along the Dover Community Trail.



Just after the Trail crosses Washington St. heading east, a high solid wood wall appears to completely block the trail. The wall appears impenetrable but is actually two separate wall sections that overlap. A pedestrian or bike traveling very slowly can maneuver through the gap and continue on the trail but the natural inclination of users at this point would be to detour off of the trail onto the surface roads. It appears that a property owner constructed the wall there to keep motorized vehicles from using the trail as a short cut through to a condominium parking lot. A better solution would be boulders or bollards, which would allow trail users to see through to recognize the trail, yet prevent unauthorized use by motorized vehicles.

Another impediment to trail connectivity and mobility was the lack of cross walks where the trail crosses Washington St. and Folsom Street. Bill Kennedy suggested a sign with flashing lights - similar to the sign on Back River Road by Garrison Street. This would provide a safer crossing for pedestrians as motorists aggressively accelerate prematurely away from the downtown area. Based on traffic speeds and observed lack of motorist courtesy at these crossings, there is a need for a reminder to motor vehicles accelerating out of the central city that they are still in a populated center.

Just south of the Folsom Street crossing, a tunnel under Silver Street provides a safe and comfortable crossing of a busy surface street.



Participants continued past the Woodman Park School onto Silver Street and then Silver Street Extension. This route allows pedestrians and cyclists to use a narrow tunnel under the Spaulding Turnpike connecting the Silver St extension to Old Littleworth Road and Chandler Way on the west side of the Spaulding Turnpike.

The tunnel, while a refuge from busy automobile-oriented highways and ramp connections crossing the Spaulding Turnpike, allows non-motorized passage under the Turnpike. Passage through the long tunnel is practicable in only one direction at a time. Even then, cyclists using the dark narrow tunnel are best advised to dismount and walk the bicycle.

Participants then headed south on NH 155 to the Coast/Wildcat Transit Bus Stops at the Irving convenience station that serves residents of a large concentration of apartment complexes about a mile west of the Spaulding Turnpike.



Continuous motor vehicle traffic here, however, moves fast in an open highway during commuting hours. Given that there are multiple destinations and bus stops on both sides of the highway at this location, participants felt that a crosswalk and traffic calming measures were necessary at this location. Bill Kennedy recommended crosswalks and crosswalk warning signing with flashing lights that could be actuated by the presence of pedestrians.

Participants continued west along NH 155 and picked up Main Street in Durham via the Lee 5 corner intersection at NH 155A.

### Durham-UNH

As the review participants approached the west edge of the University campus core, UNH Planning Director Steve Pesci met Participants at the new roundabout on Main Street. Mr. Pesci showed participants how the University successfully met transportation challenges from the west with a roundabout and the adjacent path connecting the remote West Edge parking lot with the campus core.



Mr. Pesci guided participants east by bicycle along Main Street and stopped at the A-lot transit stop for a brief discussion about the heavy use of transit at the University.

Mr. Pesci escorted participants to the UNH Dairy bar and Amtrak Station, where Mr. Pesci had arranged for a Wildcat Transit bikes-on-bus demonstration with Wildcat Transit Director Dirk Timmons and Wildcat Transit Manager Beverly Cray. Director Timmons discussed the heavy transit use at the University and noted that Wildcat Transit has been forced to allow reservations because of a high demand for bicycles-on-bus and the limited capacity for the busses to handle bicycles. The 10:25 AM Boston to Portland Downeaster train stopped at the Durham-UNH station and Mr. Pesci noted that 50 people at a time often board the Downeaster train at the Durham-UNH station.



Mr. Pesci led participants east along Main Street and discussed bicycle lane and sharrows. The University classes transitioned while participants were in front of Thompson Hall, providing an excellent vantage point to see first hand how only walking, bicycling and a heavy use of transit can provide effective mobility around the UNH Campus and Downtown Durham.

At the Quad Way/Petree Brook Road intersection with Main Street, Steve noted that the University envisions improvements to the Quad Way intersection; including the provision of two-way traffic for all four legs of the intersection. This project will transform the current Mill Road leg of the intersection that will re-purpose space in the existing “C” parking lot. Mr. Pesci explained how the rapidly expanding University of New Hampshire campus has less acreage dedicated to core campus parking than it did a generation ago. The reduction of core campus parking acreage has both re-purposed space for people and has limited the growth of additional single occupant motor vehicle traffic trips within the campus and Town core.

Mr. Pesci guided participants to the Main Street/NH 108 intersection, where he noted the necessity to prioritize transit, pedestrian and bicycle transportation improvements along NH 108 toward Newmarket .



### Durham to Newington

Participants proceeded north on NH 108 and then made the turn onto US 4 heading east. The old road grade from Old Piscataqua Rd is still present. The connection could potentially be improved to provide an access for cyclists and pedestrians, allowing them to avoid the use of the US 4 on and off-ramps with the hazards of motor vehicles accelerating, merging and diverging at the ramps. If continued along the south side of US 4 for a short way, a path could potentially provide safe connectivity to several dead-end streets including W. Arthur Grant Circle, thus avoiding two crossings of US 4 for University-bound bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

As participants proceeded east along US 4, Josh Pierce noted that a so-called “Wagon Track Trail” had been proposed for the area about a decade ago. Plans for the proposed Trail project were developed but the trail failed to gain ultimate approval due to landowner issues.

At the Back River Road approach to US 4, Bill Kennedy pointed out the bicycle push button signal call for left turn cyclists. The button enables cyclists to call the signal for a left turn without dismounting. The push button provides positive feedback to the cyclist regarding the reliability of the signal loop and solves the problem of false positives for detector sensitivity adjustment.

Bill Kennedy recommends that such a button should be installed at the Boston Harbor Road and Spur Road approaches to US 4. This intersection provides cyclists from the Dover, Durham, Rochester, Somersworth, Lee and Madbury areas with their only means to the Portsmouth and Newington area. The General Sullivan Bridge is used year-round by cycling commuters and tourists to access the Seacoast area. The signal actuation problems occur on the both the Dover-bound (via the Boston Harbor Road approach) and Portsmouth-bound (via the Spur Road approach) trips when cyclists must cross this intersection, or make a left turn. Cyclists must wait for a car to approach and trip the signal. The Boston Harbor Road approach, however, is often void of exiting motor vehicles and wait can go for inordinately long periods of time without an approaching motor vehicle calling the signal.

The US 4/Boston Harbor Road/Spur Road intersection is currently in the planning stages of a major rebuild, but that rebuild is several years away. For the longer-term solution, Larry Keniston encouraged participants to consider the Department’s proposed roundabout solution at this location. The roundabout would benefit cyclists by calming traffic and would accommodate all turns by bicycles, even in heavy directional traffic. The roundabout proposal represents a heavier commitment to surface streets, making the general environs more conducive to bicycling and ensuring winter maintenance with the a greater emphasis on on-road bicycle facilities. Bill Kennedy recommended for the interim that a push button similar to the one at Back River Road and Rt. 4, should provide Dover-bound cyclists with a way to cross this intersection.

### Newington

Tom Morgan met participants on the General Sullivan Bridge. Larry Keniston noted that the closure of the General Sullivan Bridge to bicycles and pedestrians - for 6 months - will begin November 1, 2010. Bill Kennedy felt that the closure to bicycles and pedestrians should have been

avoided by design but agreed that users of the bridge must get involved in planning processes in the future. Larry Keniston noted that the improvements to the General Sullivan Bridge that will emerge by April 28, 2011 will create a safe, sustainable and accessible bicycle and pedestrian crossing of Little Bay.

Mr. Morgan led participants from the Dover-Newington Bridge through Newington along the bike route. Mr. Morgan identified four exciting options for potential bicycle connections in the area that could be explored for feasibility and pursued if interest develops:

- (1) The Spaulding Turnpike project does not include RR infrastructure connectivity across the Turnpike for the Pease Spur Railroad. Given that the Railroad corridor will not be used as a railroad in the foreseeable future, the right of way could be utilized in the interim as a bicycle and pedestrian way connecting Exit 4 directly with Arboretum Drive.
- (2) An alternative to the rail trail would be for the Department (current owner of the drive-in theater property) to ensure that future owners of the drive-in theatre property maintain bicycle pedestrian connectivity to the east. Access to and from the drive-in theater property to the west presumably would be via a 32-wide (possibly town or private maintained) road laid out near the existing southbound Spaulding Turnpike lanes.
- (3) There is interest within the Town for a multi-use path along Nimble Hill Road, especially in the vicinity of the Newington Public School.
- (4) A connection utilizing the 1000-foot abandoned portion of Arboretum Drive to allow bicycle and pedestrian bypass of the proposed Arboretum Drive/Woodbury Avenue/Exit 3 SB intersection.



Roland Provost uses the bike route through Newington and Pease on a regular basis. The bike route includes a complicated series of on and off-road routes. The review demonstrated that the bike route through Newington and Pease, is mostly pleasant and safe with some specialty bicycle route signing in place.

#### Portsmouth

Peter Britz and Rick Taintor met participants near the Portsmouth City limit. Peter and Rick guided participants through Portsmouth via the bike route from Pease, Rockingham Road and Woodbury Avenue. Mr. Britz led participants along Dennett Street and then Maplewood Avenue.



With major traffic-calming projects completed around 2007 and 2008, Dennett Street and Maplewood Avenue amenities include on-street parking and frequent curb bulb-outs. Traffic operates at bicycle speed so that the relative narrowness of the roads does not detract from the safety and comfort for many cyclists. Mr. Britz then led participants along State Street, which is under construction. New construction on State Street, funded by an ongoing ARRA project, includes low-impact development structures like tree box filters, a sand filter for street runoff and traffic-calming amenities such as vertical curbing and on-street parking bulb-outs.

### Kittery, Elliot, South Berwick

For the ride back to Dover, participants followed a route through Maine in order to demonstrate an alternate detour for cyclists who would normally use the General Sullivan Bridge from November 1, 2010 to April 29, 2011 in order to make the connection between Dover and Portsmouth. The route through Maine requires a safe and reliable bridge crossing from Kittery to Portsmouth using the Memorial Bridge. Subsequent to the bicycle review, the New Hampshire Department of Transportation on October 20 was pleased to learn that the USDOT announced the Memorial Bridge project had received a \$20 M TIGER II grant. Bicycle and Pedestrian commuters will want to provide public input throughout the public process toward the continued development of the Memorial Bridge project.



(Senior Planner Scott Bogle, Rockingham Planning Commission)

The existing Memorial Bridge has a grid center section deck, which even in dry weather can be disconcerting at best – especially to road cyclists. A fall on the grid deck would almost certainly result in injury. Bicycle riding is not allowed on the sidewalk. To maximize safety, riders should

consider walking their bicycles on the sidewalk, although signing does allow for riding in the traffic lane on the grid deck.

The ride though Maine along route 103 is blocked in two locations. The first an underpass has a signed bicycle detour route. The detour route does require a bicyclist to cross and ride a short distance along the Route 1 Bypass, which has high volumes and speeds that make crossing difficult. A second detour is easily bypassed by riding though Elliot.

When route 103 joins route 236, the bike trail is marked to walk against traffic along route 236. Review participants had a break in traffic and crossed to the correct side of route 236 and continued riding, subsequently making the left onto the Dover-Elliot Road.

Route 101, Country Club Road in Dover, was quiet at the time of the ride but is often a difficult section of the ride. This section at normal commuter times has a fairly large volume of very high speed, aggressive traffic and no shoulders.

Submitted by

\s\ Lawrence Keniston

Larry Keniston  
Intermodal Facilities Engineer

With assistance from:



Granite State Wheelman  
President Bill Kennedy



Marc Ambrosi  
Strafford Reg. Planning Commission



Roland Provost  
Dover Bicycle Commuter

cc (email): C. Morgan, K. Cota, Attendees

Links to:

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